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ABSTRACT

This report describes policies and practices than can help administrators, faculty, and states improve the rate of transfer between two- and four-year colleges. Sections of the report focus on: (1) "Helping Students Who Transfer from Two-Year to Four-Year Colleges," focusing on the important of transfer programs and opportunities in southern states; (2) "How Do We Know If Transfer Policies and Practices Are Working," describing ways of measuring transfer activity; (3) "Who Attends Two-Year Colleges," offering a profile of students at a typical public two-year college in the southern region; (4) "What Do Two-Year College Students Study"; (5) "What Policies and Practices Are Likely To Help Students Transfer," focusing on transfer admission policies, early access to accurate transfer information, transferability and applicability of credit, institutional agreements, statewide agreements, general education core courses, common courses and course-numbering systems, credits from vocational/technical programs; and (6) two examples of comprehensive statewide guidelines and practices--North Carolina and Florida. The final section summarizes steps to a successful approach to developing transfer policies and practices. (KP)

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ED 379 015

GOALS FOR EDUCATION

Educational Benchmarks
1995

Helping Students Who Transfer from Two-Year to Four-Year Colleges

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Southern Regional Education Board

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GOALS FOR EDUCATION

BY THE YEAR 2000—

The percentage of adults who have attended college or earned two-year, four-year, and graduate degrees will be at the national averages or higher.

SREB Goals for Education
Commission for Educational Quality, 1988

Nearly half of first-time students begin their studies in two-year colleges. They attend junior colleges, community colleges and technical schools rather than four-year institutions for a number of reasons—to save on tuition costs and living expenses, to keep a job, to stay in their home communities, and to earn a place as a sophomore or junior in a four-year college by improving their academic skills.

While the data on transfer rates are imperfect, we know that about a third of the students who enter two-year colleges intend to complete an associate's degree or transfer to a four-year college or university. We also know that less than a quarter of all two-year college students actually transfer to a four-year institution. Clearly, a significant number of the two-year students who plan to seek bachelor's degrees never find their way to senior institutions.

It's true that many factors influence students' progress toward four-year degrees; they burn out, flunk out, change goals, find jobs they like, move, marry, and have children. But it's also true that the roads between two- and four-year colleges have not been as well marked or as free from potholes as the state and local leaders who established two-year college systems envisioned.

Many students who begin at two-year institutions must work their way through a tangle of conflicting policies, practices, and advice. Sometimes students transferring "up" learn too late that the math, chemistry, or history course that counted for an associate's degree will not count as a prerequisite for an upper-level course in their major. They must invest additional time and money on another introductory course or, quite possibly, another series of courses.

How can we draw better maps for these students? How can we steer them clear of detours and dead ends? This report describes policies and practices that can help administrators and faculty point the way—and help states improve the percentage of their citizens earning four-year college degrees.

Mark D. Musick, President
Southern Regional Education Board

Helping Students Who Transfer from Two-Year to Four-Year Colleges

Today more than twice as many adults are completing one or more years of college than in 1970. The percentage completing four or more years has almost doubled. These impressive gains in the SREB region have closed the gap between the South and the nation but the region continues to trail the nation in the percentage of adults who have earned associate, bachelors, graduate or professional degrees.

Unless citizens of SREB states have levels of education comparable to that of United States' citizens generally, SREB states are not likely to consistently be winners in national and international markets. It is also unlikely that citizens in these states will enjoy the same social and cultural benefits as those in other states.

SREB states established two-year community and technical colleges to increase access to postsecondary education. In the last decade, enrollment growth in two-year colleges has doubled that of four-year colleges.

Tight budgets at four-year colleges and universities have reduced the number of first-year students they can accommodate which means more students begin at two-year colleges. As universities increase tuition to offset losses in their state appropriations, even more students may choose two-year colleges because of lower tuition.

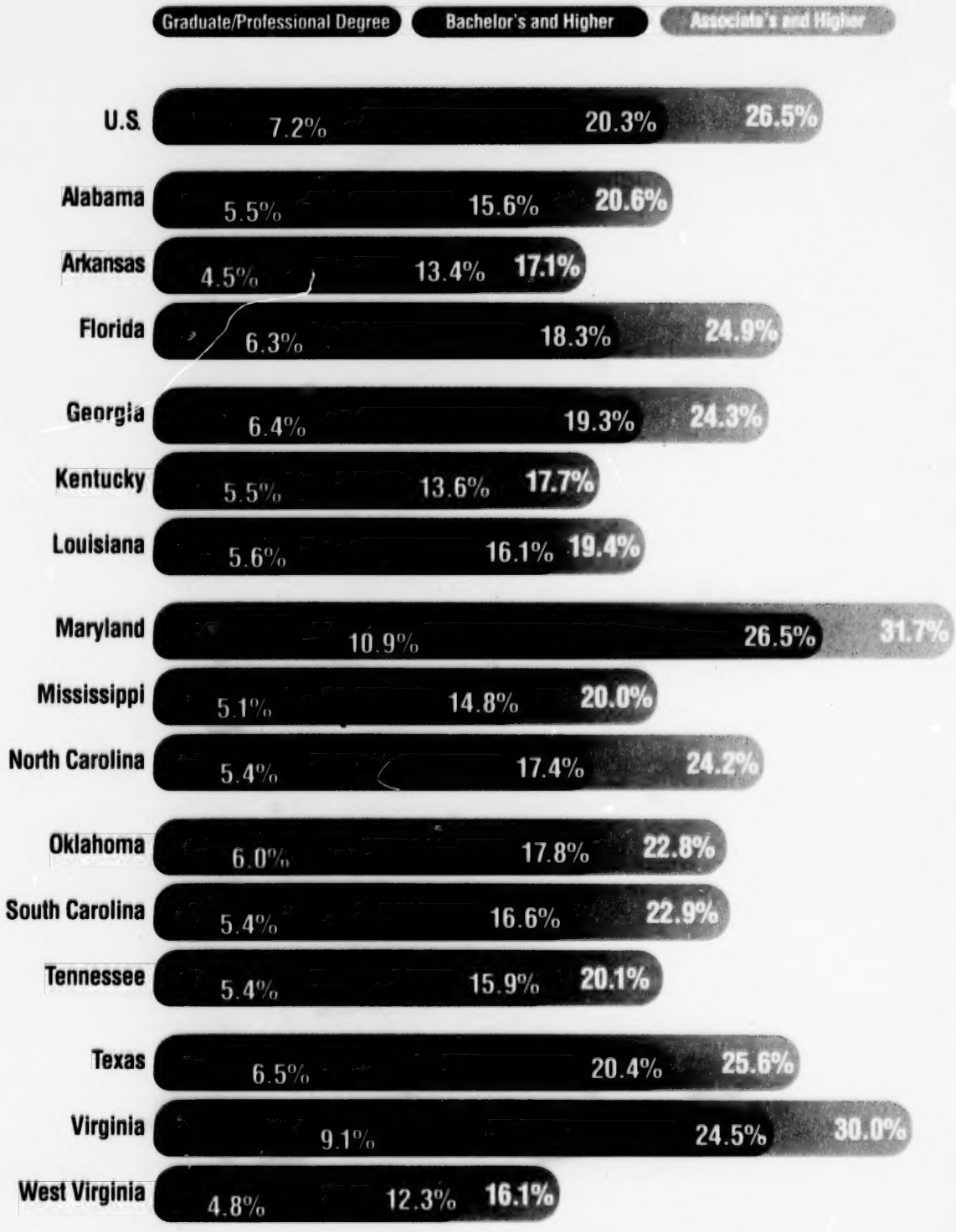
Governors, legislators, and local boards that established two-year colleges intended that students would complete courses comparable to freshmen- and sophomore-level courses offered at senior institutions. They assumed that two-year and four-year institutions would work together to have closely comparable college-level courses and program requirements; that they would have clear admission policies and processes for transfer students; and that students would have accurate, up-to-date, information about admission, transfer of credits, and degree requirements.

While enrollments at two-year colleges in SREB states have zoomed from less than a million to over 1.7 million since the 1970s, the connections between two- and four-year colleges have not worked as well as intended. Credits for courses offered at two-year institutions may be accepted by some of a state's four-year colleges but not others. Variations in institutional requirements can lead to much confusion among students planning to transfer. Students who begin college-level study at a two-year college may not receive accurate information about which courses are transferable to four-year institutions. A four-year college may give credit for college-level mathematics taken at a two-year college but the credit may not be applicable to the mathematics requirements for a degree in business or engineering. Too little discussion about the content and skills of college-level courses takes place between faculty at two-year and four-year colleges.

This report was prepared by Joseph D. Creech, SREB Associate Director for Educational Policies.

HOW MANY ADULTS HAVE COLLEGE DEGREES?

(Persons Over 25 Years Old)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Decennial Census, April 1990 (June 1993)

How Do We Know if Transfer Policies and Practices are Working?

Obviously we need ways to measure the percentage of students at two-year colleges who transfer to four-year colleges. There are several ways to estimate this. For example, compare the number of students who transfer each year to the total enrollment in the community college or compare the number of transfers to the number of persons who receive associate degrees.

The Center for the Study of Community Colleges defines the transfer rate as "all students entering the community college in a given year who have no prior college experience and who complete at least twelve college-credit units, divided into the number of that group who take one or more classes at an in-state, public university within four years." Based on that definition, the Center reports a national transfer rate of about 22 percent.

If independent colleges and out-of-state institutions were included, this rate would be a bit higher, but the rate is consistent with those found in other national studies of two-year college students. Based on the Center's definition, transfer rates for SREB states that provided data average 18 percent and range from 16 to 30 percent. Compared to whites, blacks and Hispanics are about half as likely to transfer. The average rate is 12 percent for blacks, 11 percent for Hispanics, and 20 percent for whites.

Three important factors affect transfer rates: (1) who attends two-year colleges (the social, economic, and academic backgrounds of students); (2) what they study (students' intentions and goals and the type of program undertaken); and, (3) the degree to which state and institutional policies and practices encourage and help students make the transition from two-year to four-year programs.

Who Attends Two-Year Colleges?

About one-half of all entering college students begin at two-year institutions. More than half of the first-time freshmen in Alabama, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas attend two-year institutions.

At a typical public two-year college in the SREB region:

- Every other person enrolled is over 25 years of age—one of five is between 35 and 65 years old (70 percent of all undergraduates who are 35 years old and older attend two-year colleges).
- Six of ten persons are attending part time (fewer than three of ten four-year college students attend part time).
- One of four students is not white (40 percent of black students and 53 percent of Hispanic students attend two-year colleges).
- About one of three first-time students is enrolled in at least one remedial or developmental course.

What Do Two-Year College Students Study?

About one-third of students entering community and junior colleges intend to complete an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree or transfer to a four-year institution. Of every ten students earning associate degrees, three students complete programs in liberal general studies; two complete programs in business administration, management, or marketing and distribution; and two complete health sciences or allied health programs.

Persons entering public two-year colleges can choose from a wide array of programs:

- Academic programs lead to Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees and are intended to parallel the first two years in a four-year college. Courses completed for these degrees usually transfer to four-year institutions and are often referred to as "college parallel" programs.
- Occupational technical programs prepare individuals for specific jobs and occupations that do not require a baccalaureate degree, but require training beyond high school. These programs usually lead to a certificate or an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree. For the most part, courses completed for the AAS degree are not considered to be applicable as credit toward a baccalaureate degree. However, some four-year institutions have agreements with community and technical colleges to accept selected AAS degree credits.
- General educational development, adult basic education, and literacy programs are designed to upgrade general knowledge and skills, and are not transferrable to four-year degree programs.

A recent study of community college transfer students in Texas indicates that students who choose an academic program at a two-year college are three times more likely to transfer to a senior institution than those who enroll in technical programs. Similar findings are reported in other state and national studies.

What Policies and Practices Are Likely to Help Students Transfer?

Ideally, a state's postsecondary education system should allow students to move through as if they were enrolled in a single institution. They should have options to move faster or slower or change programs with little confusion and the least possible additional cost in time and money.

Transfer policies and practices that connect two-year and four-year institutions vary considerably. Several states have statewide agreements that address:

- admission requirements;
- transferability of credit;
- transcript information;
- courses to be taken to satisfy general education requirements;
- courses that are required for entering particular fields of study;
- services for transfer students;
- information systems to monitor the transfer process.

Most states have statewide committees made up of representatives of two-year and four-year institutions. These committees monitor the transfer process, make and publish recommendations on transfer of credits, hear appeals from students, and resolve disputes between institutions about whether credits will be accepted and how they will be applied.

A 1994 act passed by the Alabama Legislature created "an articulation and general studies committee". The committee will develop a statewide freshman- and sophomore-level general studies curriculum and a statewide agreement for the transfer of credit among all public institutions of higher education. Once the agreement is established, the committee will be responsible for resolving any problems in its administration and interpretation.

States are creating computerized databases that provide information on two-year college courses accepted by four-year institutions. Alabama, Florida and Maryland have such programs. Several states have or are developing systems through which four-year institutions provide information to two-year institutions on the performance of their transfer students. Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina have such systems in place.

Transfer Admission Policies

The best single predictor of success for a transfer student is performance in current and previous college-level work. Institutional admission policies typically require students transferring from other colleges to have a "C" average (2.0 on a 4.0 scale).

State-Level Transfer Policies and Practices

	AL	AR	FL	GA	KY	LA	MD	MS	NC	OK	SC	TN	TX	VA	WV
A common "core curriculum" for public two-year and four-year colleges		■		■				■		■		■			■
Common course numbering system for beginning college-level courses			■		■								■		
Use of common course syllabi and content			■												
A common academic calendar for public two-year and four-year institutions			■	■								■	■		
Transfer student counselling guides	■		■			■	■		■	■		■		■	
A common transcript format			■						■				■		
Staff assigned to help make the transfer process work at both the two-year and four-year institutions			■	■		■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	
A statewide committee comprised of representatives of two-year and four-year institutions establishes recommendations on transferability of credits from two-year to four-year institutions	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Students who complete an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science degree at a public two-year institution are generally assured of admission to a state-supported senior institution. In most cases, these students will be given priority over transfers from two-year institutions who have not earned an Associate Degree.

Students transferring from two-year colleges are not typically required to pass an examination for admission to a four-year college or university. But in a few states, examinations are required for entering junior- and senior-level courses and programs. These tests, sometimes called "rising junior examinations," help assure that students in all public institutions meet certain minimum standards.

In Florida, students must pass the College Level Academic Skills Test to earn an associate degree and to take junior or senior level courses at a public four-year institution. The University System of Georgia requires all students to pass the Georgia Regents' Examination to earn a baccalaureate degree. The examination is taken before the end of the sophomore year. In Texas all students at public two-year and four-year institutions must pass the Texas Academic Skills Program tests by the end of the sophomore year.

In 1995, Arkansas will implement "a rising junior test" that all public college and university students must take by the end of the sophomore year. The test will be used to evaluate student learning in the general education curriculum but is not a requirement for graduation or for entry into upper level courses.

Students who seek admission to certain programs (nursing and other health sciences, engineering, and other specific professional and para-professional programs) may need a higher grade-point average and specific prerequisite courses or examinations to be admitted. These requirements usually apply to all students who enter these programs, not just transfer students.

State-level admission policies for transfer students generally are statements of good practices and/or minimum standards. Institutions may establish higher standards and are not necessarily required to admit every student who meets the minimum standards.

A new development—a *joint admission agreement*—is being tried in a few states. Joint admission agreements allow students to be simultaneously admitted to a community college and a four-year institution. To transfer to the four-year institution, students must take specific courses and earn an associate degree, attain a specified grade-point average, and meet whatever additional requirements may apply to specific programs. Massachusetts began such a policy in 1993. While no SREB state has joint admission agreements, policies in several SREB states already assure community college graduates acceptance into a public four-year institution.

Advising Transfer Students

Many of the problems students encounter when they transfer (especially from two-year to four-year institutions) can be resolved with a good advising system and early notification about acceptable credits. Early access to accurate transfer information is the key.

Among the practices that can assure good advice for transfer students are:

- Identifying a transfer coordinator on both two-year and four-year campuses to assist students transferring into or out of institutions. Statewide policies typically recommend or require that institutions have such coordinators.

- Publishing institutional and statewide transfer guides that list transfer agreements and comparable courses. These guides provide descriptions of the admission, transcript evaluation, orientation, and advising processes. Transfer guides should be incorporated in the new computerized degree-audit systems that allow students and advisors to monitor completion of degree requirements.
- Providing transfer students who have been admitted with information not only about what credits are accepted, but also what credits and requirements will need to be completed for a bachelor's degree. A preliminary or final evaluation of previously earned college credits should be included with the notification of admissions or should be sent to the applicant within a short time after admission. This practice provides an opportunity to resolve misunderstandings about transferability and applicability of credits to particular programs before the student enrolls.
- Developing an appeals process for students who want to challenge their initial transfer evaluation.

Transferability and Applicability of Credit

Determining whether credits will be accepted and how they will be applied requires more than reading course descriptions in college catalogs. The most difficult and time-consuming task in developing sound transfer policies and practices is getting faculty at two-year and four-year institutions to agree on what is college-level study and on courses that are comparable and fulfill basic requirements. Faculty participation is absolutely necessary if policies and practices are to be successfully implemented.

Any approach (institution-to-institution agreements, statewide articulation committees, agreement on general education core requirements, or common courses and common course numbers) will encounter resistance from some faculty in four-year institutions who believe that faculty at two-year institutions do not teach comparable courses. Yet follow-up studies in several states show that students transferring from two-year colleges perform about as well in upper division courses as do students who entered four-year institutions as freshmen.

Faculty at two-year and four-year institutions can reach agreement on course content and objectives. Agreements have been made when faculty have met to discuss their courses; when they have information on the performance of transfer students in subsequent courses in the same or similar disciplines; and when they focus on course *comparability* rather than course *equivalency*.

Different approaches are used to develop agreements on what credits will transfer. They include contracts between individual institutions (institutional agreements), program-to-program agreements developed at the state level (statewide agreements), general education core curricula offered by all institutions, and common courses and course-numbering systems.

Institutional Agreements

In states where there are no formal statewide policies, individual two-year and four-year institutions work with each other to develop institution-to-institution agreements on what will transfer. These may be course-to-course or program-to-program agreements.

They define what parts of the program(s) will be provided by each institution, what courses are comparable, any restrictions on

the acceptance of transfer credits, and special admission requirements such as minimum grade-point averages.

The most frequent problem with these arrangements comes when one four-year institution grants credit for particular courses or programs at individual two-year institutions and another does not. Good advising and transfer guides for students will help with this problem, but when four-year institutions disagree on what credits are acceptable from each two-year institution, there will be some confusion for students and parents.

Statewide Agreements

Statewide guidelines for various academic programs can help assure more efficiency and consistency in the transfer of credits. These guidelines usually identify freshmen and sophomore courses that are commonly required for completing baccalaureate degrees. Credits earned in the approved programs at two-year institutions are applicable to comparable programs at four-year institutions.

These agreements may identify major components of a program (general education or a specialty) or an entire associate degree program that will transfer as a block of credits, eliminating the need to resolve individual course equivalency issues.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission requires state-supported two-year and four-year institutions to develop program-to-program agreements. These "recommended transfer programs" identify freshman- and sophomore-level (lower division) courses, including general education and major requirements, at the community college that will fulfill certain requirements for the baccalaureate degree at the senior institution. Maryland's colleges must provide their students with specific information about the transferability of courses to four-year colleges. Typically this is done when students meet with their advisors or when they register for classes. Senior colleges must provide community colleges with current information about the acceptability of credits. Institutions must notify each other of changes in program requirements.

The agreement between public two-year and four-year institutions in Mississippi outlines degree programs at the community and junior colleges and the courses in those programs for which students will be given credit at the different public senior colleges in Mississippi.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, as part of its statutory authority, has approved transfer programs for various majors and disciplines. These curricula are primarily concerned with course requirements for specific major subjects (agricultural sciences, engineering, business administration, criminal justice, health education, etc.), but also include general education courses. Course credits earned through these approved curricula apply toward the appropriate degree requirements at senior institutions.

The General Education Core Courses

The general education curriculum is intended to provide students with a comprehensive view of the liberal arts and to help students select a major field of study. General education typically includes 40 to 50 semester hours or about one-third of the credits required for baccalaureate degrees. The core usually includes courses from the following areas: English composition, humanities and fine arts, mathematics and natural sciences, and social and behavioral sciences. The total number of credits specified for the core in state policies ranges from 32 to 56 semester hours (48 to 84 quarter hours).

General education requirements for major fields of study vary widely—both within and among four-year institutions. These variations can lead to much confusion among students planning to transfer. Agreements on general education core courses allows institutions and students to choose specific courses that will fit into broad categories and reduces the need for courses to match up precisely. This approach gives institutions more control over which courses are included in a general education curriculum.

Several SREB states have identified a general education core curriculum:

- Florida legislation requires each public university and community college to establish a general education core curriculum "which shall require at least 36 semester hours of college credit in the liberal arts and sciences."
- Statewide transfer committees in North Carolina and Virginia recommend the number of hours that should be completed in each general education discipline, but do not require all institutions to offer the same courses. Complying with the recommendations is voluntary.
- The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education specify completion of a 37 semester-hour general education core to earn Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees. Students who complete the prescribed general education courses at a public two-year institution may transfer to any senior institution in the state system and are assured of having met general education requirements at the senior institution.
- In Arkansas, all public institutions are required to identify 35 semester hours of courses that will transfer to and be accepted by other institutions. These "core" courses are reviewed and agreed upon by the chief academic officers at all institutions.
- Within the University System of Georgia, two-thirds of the core curriculum consists of courses in grammar and composition, humanities and fine arts, mathematics and natural sciences, and social and behavioral sciences; one-third of the core is lower-division coursework appropriate to the student's major field of study. Each institution identifies courses to be included in its core curriculum based on systemwide guidelines. Once approved by the University System Transfer Credit Committee, courses completed in the core curriculum at one institution will receive full credit at all other institutions within the system. Institutions must submit proposed changes in the curriculum to the Transfer Credit Committee for approval.

Common Courses And Course-Numbering System

Florida is the only SREB state with common courses and a course-numbering system used by all public two-year and four-year institutions. Committees of two-year and four-year faculty have developed content outlines for all courses. Courses are assigned a course prefix and number to be used by all public institutions.

This system is designed to eliminate confusion about which courses will count toward degree requirements at either the sending or receiving institution. For transfer purposes, English 101 at a community college is English 101 at a senior college or university. The faculty committees for the different academic disciplines meet periodically to review and update course content.

In Texas, there is a voluntary course-numbering system. Several institutions use it. The Kentucky Council on Higher Education is developing criteria for institutions to use to assign course numbers. The criteria include the level of difficulty and complexity of course content.

Credits from Vocational/Technical Programs

A current issue in several SREB states is how senior institutions treat credits earned in occupational-technical programs that do not lead to a transferable degree (Associate of Arts or Associate of Science). Not all occupational and vocational programs require the same English, mathematics, social studies, science, and humanities courses that must be completed for Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees.

The general practice is that individual four-year institutions develop transfer agreements with technical institutes or community colleges after reviewing specific courses and programs. If the courses in the vocational/technical programs are comparable to those required for the Associate of Arts or Science degrees, most state policies allow them to be applied toward a baccalaureate degree.

The University System of Georgia and the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) have agreed to establish cooperative programs to help students. For example, where a DTAE institution and a University System institution are located in the same community, the University System institution will offer liberal arts general education courses that also will be listed in course offerings at the DTAE institution. Both systems will encourage individual technical institutions and universities to develop pilot transfer agreements for related programs.

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education has identified courses offered by the state's technical colleges that are transferable to all public senior colleges and universities within the state.

Two Examples of Comprehensive Statewide Guidelines and Practices

Some states seek to reduce confusion among transfer students and assure consistent evaluation of two-year college courses and programs by creating statewide committees made up of representatives from both two-year and four-year institutions, governing boards, and coordinating agencies. These committees establish and publish policies and/or recommendations on admission of transfer students and transferability of credits; hear appeals from students or institutions who believe their courses and credits are not being evaluated fairly by receiving institutions; and provide a process for institutions to keep each other informed about degree requirements. In some states, institutional compliance with guidelines and recommendations of the articulation committee is voluntary. In others, some or all of the guidelines are mandates.

North Carolina

The North Carolina Joint Committee on College Transfer Students is sponsored by the North Carolina Association of Colleges and Universities in cooperation with the University of North Carolina, the State Board of Community Colleges, and the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. The Joint Committee provides a continuing forum for resolution of transfer problems, and it publishes recommendations and guidelines for transfer. Public and non-public, two-year and four-year institutions work together voluntarily to carry out the Joint Committee's recommendations. Created in 1965, the Joint Committee issued its first set of guidelines in 1967. The guidelines have

been revised five times, most recently in 1994. The current guidelines address:

- admission requirements;
- the transferability of credits obtained under varied grading systems (pass/fail, satisfactory/unsatisfactory, etc.);
- the transferability of credits earned through atypical methods or awarded in non-traditional ways (credit by examination, military service credits, extension courses, on-the-job training, etc.);
- the transferability of credits earned through technical programs;
- essential information to be included on a transcript;
- the kinds of courses that should be taken at two-year institutions to satisfy general education requirements for graduation from four-year institutions; and,
- the kinds of courses in two-year institutions that meet degree requirements of four-year institutions in liberal arts, fine arts, basic sciences, professional and para-professional fields.

In addition to developing the guidelines, the Joint Committee:

- compiles and publishes the specific transfer policies of all senior colleges and universities including specific institution-to-institution agreements;
- maintains a Transfer Counselor Network;
- hears appeals from students; and,
- monitors the effectiveness of the guidelines and the process.

In the past five years, the number of persons transferring from community colleges to public senior colleges and universities in North Carolina has grown from about 2500 to 4000—a 60 percent increase. Community college enrollment in North Carolina grew by about 20 percent during this same period. Using the transfer rate as defined by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, North Carolina's rate is 16 percent. The national rate is 22 percent. A study of University of North Carolina graduates indicates that 51 percent of transfer students took nine semester or more to graduate compared to 48 percent of students who entered as freshmen.

North Carolina's approach gives each institution complete control over its admission and academic policies. From the students' perspective this means that two-year college credits can be and are treated differently by four-year institutions. By publishing the policies of all senior colleges and universities, the Joint Committee alerts prospective transfer students that credits which are acceptable at some institutions are not transferable to others.

Florida

Florida's first transfer agreement was established in 1959. The community college and university systems adopted a new agreement in 1971 and created the "Articulation Coordinating Committee." The Committee includes representatives from the university system, the community college system, the area vocational centers, and the public schools. A member of the Education Commissioner's staff chairs the Committee.

The Committee's primary function is to ensure that transfer policies and practices allow public high school graduates to move smoothly from one level of education to another. Legislation approved in 1993 requires the Department of Education to assess the effectiveness of these processes and expands the Articulation Committee's responsibilities to include accountability for the articulation processes.

The Committee also:

- establishes groups of university, community college, and school district faculty to discuss articulation in different subject areas;
- hears appeals and reviews instances of student admission and transfer difficulties;
- monitors the effectiveness of the transfer process;
- recommends and develops policies and procedures to improve articulation systemwide; and,
- collects and reports on successful cooperative programs.

Among its other key elements, Florida's Articulation Agreement:

- requires each state university and community college to establish a general education core curriculum of at least 36 hours in the liberal arts and sciences for students who intend to earn a baccalaureate degree;
- guarantees the transfer of all general education courses in the core curriculum to all public community colleges and universities;
- prohibits universities from requiring any further lower-division general education courses if a student completes the general education program at another public institution;
- establishes the Associate of Arts as the transfer degree and the primary basis for admission of transfer students from community colleges to upper division study in a state university;
- guarantees that students completing the Associate of Arts degree at a public community college will be classified as a junior upon transferring to an institution in the state university system;
- requires students to pass the College Level Academic Skills Test to receive an associate or baccalaureate degree;
- establishes a common course-numbering system and a common college transcript to be used by public colleges and universities;
- recommends a common academic calendar; and,
- defines how colleges will accept credits earned through Advanced Placement, the College Level Examination Program, and other forms of credit-by-examination.

Most Florida high school graduates begin their college education in a community college. Twenty-six percent of those who enter community colleges earn an associate degree; two-thirds of those who earn associate degrees enroll in a public or private four-year college. Florida does not provide the data requested by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges to calculate a transfer rate.

Among the SREB states, Florida has the most formal, comprehensive set of transfer processes. In contrast with the voluntary nature of North Carolina's guidelines for transfer, Florida mandates transfer policies for individual public institutions. Most policies related to articulation between the different systems and levels of public education in Florida have legal authority through statute or administrative rule.

The difference in the two states' approaches is not so much in the content of policies but in how the policies are developed and implemented.

What Makes Transfer Programs Work?

Not all students who enter two-year colleges want to transfer to four-year colleges and universities. For those who do, the path should be clear and understandable. When students enroll in a course at a two-year college, they should be informed about the acceptability of "college-level credits" by four-year colleges. Four-year colleges should inform transfer students of the applicability of credits earned at other institutions prior to their enrollment. Curricula that lead to the Associate of Applied Science and other programs not initially intended as transfer programs should be reviewed to determine which, if any, of the courses required for such programs contain or need to contain objectives and content comparable to freshmen- and sophomore-level college courses.

Transfer policies and practices vary among SREB states, but it is clear that any successful approach will:

- ask two- and four-year institutions to agree on (and clearly define) what college-level study is and how the responsibility for instruction will be shared;
- require the involvement and cooperation of faculty from various disciplines and programs at two-year and four-year institutions. States should encourage and support activities that bring two-year and four-year college faculties together to agree on content and to develop outlines for a core of freshmen- and sophomore-level courses that are applicable to baccalaureate degree;
- address transfer admission;
- include policies for the transfer of credits for general education and major fields of study;
- inform students about the remaining requirements for a baccalaureate degree after transfer credits have been applied;
- advise transfer students as they enter and leave institutions;
- identify a state-level group responsible for implementing and monitoring policies;
- include a uniform, consistent method for reporting the number and percentage of two-year college students who continue their education in four-year colleges. States should collect and report data that support the Center for the Study of Community Colleges' definition of transfer rate. By so doing, each state will be able to compare institutional and state-level data to a national benchmark and monitor the effectiveness of its transfer policies over time;
- establish a system to collect information on the academic performance of students transferring from two-year to four-year colleges and to report to individual two-year colleges on how well their students do at four-year colleges;
- take into account the diversity of socioeconomic and academic backgrounds and the different educational goals of students entering two-year institutions compared to those entering four-year institutions; and,
- acknowledge that students have responsibilities for becoming aware of which courses are required for particular programs and for delays that result when they change their programs of study.

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